



MP for Remutaka

Minister of Education

Minister of Health

Minister of State Services

Leader of the House

Minister Responsible for Ministerial Services

13 OCT 2020

9(2)(a)

Ref: C017265

Dear 9(2)(a)

I am responding to your request of 28 August 2020 to the Ministry of Education, asking for my position on gender specific salutations in schools and educating students on the Black Lives Matter movement.

The Government is committed to creating an education system where all children and young people feel understood, respected and valued. We want all communities to feel safe, connected and free from racism and prejudice. Education has a critical role to play in this, and resources used by schools are required to be inclusive and promote and value cultural diversity.

As you know, schools in New Zealand are self-governing through their Boards, and are able to make independent decisions about the day-to-day operations of their school, including how teachers and other adults are addressed by students. This is a decision for each school to make in consultation with its staff and school community.

The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) is underpinned by core principles that guide school decision-making, and these include cultural inclusion and diversity. The Ministry also provides resources to support schools to create inclusive environments, explore racism and the themes of diversity, inclusion, empathy and respect for others. You can read more at nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Principles and inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/.

Schools have the autonomy to design teaching and learning programmes that meet the needs of their students and school community. While the Ministry does not direct schools to teach certain topics, and there are no prescriptive lesson plans to follow, there is an expectation that important social issues, such as the Black Lives Matter movement, are explored. This helps to ensure students develop an awareness of what is going on in the world around them, and how this can affect and shape their attitudes and behaviours.

You may also be interested to know, last year the Government announced that New Zealand's histories will be taught in all schools and kura by 2022. Knowing our collective histories will help all students develop a stronger sense of identity, as well as increasing knowledge and understanding of the experiences of Māori and Pacific people. Through understanding the lessons of our past, students can apply these to help shape New Zealand's future as a diverse and inclusive nation.

I hope this information is helpful. I wish you all the very best.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'CH', representing Chris Hipkins.

Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education